



## Linguistic Hybridity at the Workplace: A Study of Urdu-English Translingual Practices in Pakistan

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the patterns and sociolinguistic functions of Urdu-English translingual practices in informal office interactions within a government workplace in Rahim Yar Khan, Pakistan. Grounded in observational methodology and drawing on theories from interactional sociolinguistics, Communication Accommodation Theory, and the Markedness Model, the research explores how bilingual speakers employ code-switching as a strategic tool for navigating social relationships, institutional hierarchies, and pragmatic goals. Data collected from naturally occurring conversations among office employees reveal that language alternation is systematically tied to variables such as speaker role, setting, and communicative intent. English emerges predominantly in upward or task-oriented exchanges, while Urdu facilitates relational bonding, humor, and expressions of solidarity. The study identifies a nuanced functional distribution between the two languages, with intra-sentential switching and tag-switching serving as key structural patterns. Far from signaling linguistic deficiency, code-switching operates as a sophisticated rhetorical device that reflects both cultural hybridity and professional pragmatism. This research contributes to the growing body of scholarship on bilingualism in post-colonial contexts by foregrounding the dynamic, negotiated, and socially embedded nature of workplace discourse in Pakistan. The findings advocate for a more inclusive view of bilingual practices as assets in professional communication, challenging monolingual norms and highlighting the communicative richness of hybrid linguistic repertoires.



## **Introduction**

In contemporary multilingual societies, especially post-colonial contexts like Pakistan, bilingualism has become an everyday linguistic reality. In urban professional settings, the interaction between Urdu, the national language, and English, the language of global business and education, has given rise to dynamic conversational patterns marked by code-switching and code-mixing. These communicative shifts are most prominently visible in workplace settings, where professionals of varying linguistic proficiencies and social backgrounds interact in hybrid linguistic modes.

This research explores Urdu-English code-switching in informal office settings during breaks, lunch hours, corridor talks, and casual encounters focusing on the patterns, functions, and social meanings of language alternation as observed in naturally occurring conversations.

## **Conceptual Foundation and Variables**

This study is grounded in observational sociolinguistics, emphasizing real-time and context-bound language use. The independent variable in this research is the contextual setting of the office environment (e.g., lunch breaks, informal team discussions, casual hallway talks), which varies across time and social configurations. The dependent variable is the frequency and nature of Urdu-English code-switching specifically, how often and in what ways speakers switch between languages.

A third intervening variable is speaker characteristics, such as age, gender, educational background, and professional hierarchy, which may indirectly influence the frequency or type of code-switching observed. Thus, the study examines the relationship between informal office interaction settings and the linguistic behaviors that emerge, noting how different contextual stimuli (topic, participants, setting) activate particular kinds of language switching.

Relevance of Code-Switching in Office Settings is phenomenon of code-switching in office environments is both linguistically significant and sociologically rich. As Gumperz (1982) suggests, conversational code-switching is not arbitrary, it is often a marker of group solidarity, power relations, and identity performance. In Pakistan, English is typically associated with formality, professionalism, and prestige, whereas Urdu carries nuances of familiarity, intimacy, and cultural identity (Rahman, 2002). The interplay of these codes in office discourse reflects not just linguistic preferences but the complex navigation of social roles, institutional norms, and interpersonal dynamics. Whereas formal meetings and official documentation may enforce English usage, informal conversations give employees greater freedom to express themselves through hybridized linguistic forms. As such, informal contexts offer the ideal observational setting to explore code-switching as a spontaneous, socially-driven behavior, rather than as a performance tied to institutional obligation.

In addition, such bilingual interactions offer insights into broader sociolinguistic trends, such as language convergence, prestige planning, and bilingual identity negotiation. They also reflect the linguistic duality of urban professionals, who often undergo linguistic compartmentalization: English for the formal, and Urdu for the personal or social.

## **Observational Approach**

The essence of this research is grounded in naturally occurring language use, an observational method is not just appropriate but essential. According to Labov (1972), language can only be fully understood when observed in its natural habitat, uninfluenced by external recording or researcher interference. In line with this tradition, this study adopts a non-participant observational approach,

where conversations are discreetly noted, recorded (with consent), and transcribed for linguistic analysis.

The settings include: Lunchroom chats, Informal hallway exchanges, Casual desk-side discussions. These instances provide fertile ground for examining how language is used in real-time for specific pragmatic functions such as humor, solidarity, politeness, assertion, or resistance (Myers-Scotton, 1993).

### **Linguistic and Sociolinguistic Framework**

The study operates within an interactional sociolinguistic framework, drawing on:

1. Gumperz's (1982) theory of contextualization cues
2. Myers-Scotton's (1993) Markedness Model
3. Poplack's (1980) classification of intersentential and intrasentential code-switching
4. Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles, 1973)

These frameworks provide interpretive tools to understand not only when code-switching occurs but the speaker intends, how the audience interprets the switch, and what it accomplishes socially.

### **Research Objectives (Observational Method)**

The following objectives guide this research:

1. To identify the frequency and typology of Urdu-English code-switching in informal office contexts using naturalistic observation and transcription.
2. To analyze the pragmatic functions of code-switching—e.g., expressing politeness, humor, assertion, emphasis, or emotional nuance.
3. To observe the influence of speaker roles, status, and relationships on language choice, considering variables such as seniority, gender, and department affiliation.
4. To interpret how code-switching facilitates or obstructs communication in multilingual office environments, including the role it plays in creating inclusivity or exclusion.

Significance of the study contributes to the growing field of workplace sociolinguistics by offering empirical insight into how bilingualism manifests not in classrooms or scripted interviews, but in living, breathing, professional environments. The findings may have implications for HR and training departments, by helping them understand communication trends among employees. Language policy in workplaces, particularly in multilingual nations. Sociolinguistic theory, by adding to the body of work on real-time bilingual discourse. Interpersonal dynamics, as language reflects and constructs social hierarchies and relationships

Furthermore, it encourages a nuanced approach to linguistic competence that transcends fluency in a single language, emphasizing the ability to navigate linguistic boundaries with ease, sensitivity, and awareness.

### **Literature Review**

In his seminal work on interactional sociolinguistics, Gumperz emphasized the importance of contextual cues in code-switching practices. He reasoned that language choices made in bilingual contexts are driven by social meaning, not just grammatical strength. In workplace contexts, these contextual functions (tone, topic, relationship, etc.) signal when it might be appropriate or expected to switch from Urdu to English. This idea is useful in understanding how bilingual speakers in an office space compose their codes during informal contexts such as lunch breaks or hallway discussions. (Gumperz, 1982).

### **Towards the typology of code-switching linguistics**

Poplack's quantitative and structural analysis of code-switching provided essential distinctions: intersentential, intrasentential, and tag-switching. The distinctions help to determine the syntactic limits around code-switching events. In admin-bureau conversations, her method allows a precise way of locating switching events; for example, how a manager uses tagswitching to minimize directives, or how an employee uses intrasentential switching when talking about technical topics (Poplack, 1980).

### **Social Motivations for Code-switching: Evidence from Africa**

The framework of the Markedness Model has been articulated by Myers-Scotton, who describes code-switching as intentional. This theoretical framework posits that code-switching is used socially, to demonstrate solidarity, maintain distance, or wield power, among others. This model proves useful when analyzing language choice in workplace contexts and how power dynamics and role relations shape language choice. For example, a subordinate might use more Urdu to be respectful, while a manager might choose English to demonstrate authority over staff members or demonstrate an international aspect of the company (Myers-Scotton, 1993).

### **An introduction to sociolinguistics**

Holmes explored the social dimensions of language use, highlighting how code-switching can fulfill discourse functions such as adding emphasis, conveying humor, or managing conflict. These functions are most relevant in everyday office interactions, especially during informal socialization, such as lunch or tea breaks. Holmes' classification helps us identify instances of code-switching according to their communicative intent (Holmes, 2013).

### **Code-switching in communication Language, interaction and identity**

Auer was a proponent of a conversational analysis in the study of code-switching, arguing that it is a more informative analysis of real-time discourse than taking up isolated utterances. This is relevant to the observational framework used in this study, as the naturalistic data from spontaneous conversation assists in unpacking the underlying meanings associated with code choices (Auer, 1998).

### **Bilingualism**

Romaine highlighted both grammatical constraints and social motivations for code-switching. Her dual approach speaks to the multilingual environment of an office in Pakistan, where social prestige tied to English and emotions found in Urdu are at play together. Her model helps distinguish structurally motivated switches from socially driven ones (Romaine, 1995).

### **Social meaning in linguistic structures Code-switching in Norway**

Their differentiation between situational and metaphorical code-switching provides a foundational lens for analyzing linguistic behavior. Situational switches occur due to changes in setting, while metaphorical switches reflect shifts in conversational roles or topics. In office interactions, metaphorical switches might occur when a conversation shifts from formal project discussions to personal anecdotes (Blom & Gumperz, 1972).

### **Translingual practice**

Canagarajah introduced the idea of translanguaging, arguing that bilingual speakers fluidly move between languages to maximize communicative potential. Rather than viewing code-switching as a deficiency, he presented it as a skillful negotiation of meaning. This view is particularly empowering in analyzing Pakistani office workers who use Urdu and English not out of necessity but as a strategic choice (Canagarajah, 2013).

### **“How can you tell?” Towards a common-sense explanation of conversational code-switching**

Wei proposed an ecological perspective on bilingualism, urging researchers to study language within its social and physical environment. His approach supports the observational method by validating naturalistic data as more representative of actual language practices. Wei's model allows this study to consider spatial and relational variables—such as the location within the office or hierarchy among interlocutors—that affect language choice (Wei, 2005).

### **Growing up bilingual**

Zentella's ethnographic research on Puerto Rican children's bilingualism highlighted how language use is deeply tied to identity and community. Her findings are translatable to adult workplace settings, where code-switching may serve as an expression of belonging or differentiation. For instance, an Urdu switch in an all-English conversation may indicate camaraderie among colleagues of the same ethnic background (Zentella, 1997).

### **Language, ideology and power Language-learning among the Muslims of Pakistan & North India**

In his comprehensive account of language politics in Pakistan, Rahman traced how English acquired institutional prestige. His analysis helps explain why English persists in office communication and why code-switching is often hierarchical—where superiors initiate English switches more frequently to denote status (Rahman, 2002).

### **Code-switching in Pakistani English newspapers**

Their empirical study of Pakistani workplaces found code-switching to be not just common but expected. The research showed how bilingual workers strategically shift between Urdu and English for better comprehension, professional image, and interpersonal bonding. Their work underscores the pragmatic and symbolic functions of code-switching in organizational contexts (Rehman & Mehmood, 2015).

### **Investigating code-switching practices in corporate interactions.**

The authors explored how professionals in corporate contexts engage in code-switching to explicitly enhance clarity, or convey aspects of culture. Their analyses of executive discussions revealed that the executives often used Urdu as a language of rapport-building, while code-switching into English indicated their professional expertise. This provides evidence that code-switching, while culturally rooted, is used as a social and professional resource throughout their interactions. (Bashir & Mahmood, 2021).

## **The alchemy of English: The spread, functions, and models of non-native English**

Kachru's World English framework established Pakistani English as a localized and nativized variety. His work legitimizes the hybrid forms often seen in code-switched conversations, where Urdu syntax may blend with English vocabulary. This hypothetical underpinning supports the view that code-switching is not language confusion but a likeness of localized multi-lingual standards (Kachru, 1986).

## **Towards a theory of relational lodging through language**

The Communication Accommodation Theory claims speakers will alter their language to reflect convergence or divergence in a social context. In a stratified office environment, potential language choices for subordinates are English (to converge with their superiors), or Urdu (to create solidarity with their peers). This dynamic adds a psychological layer to code-switching behavior (Giles et al., 1973).

## **Methods and Materials**

This study employs a qualitative observational research design to investigate patterns of Urdu-English code-switching within a professional office environment. By focusing on authentic interactions among bilingual employees, the research captures the naturalistic use of language in everyday workplace contexts. The study site was a mid-sized office of Punjab Social Protection in Rahim Yar Khan, Pakistan, where participants from diverse professional backgrounds routinely engaged in multilingual exchanges.

Data were gathered through non-intrusive observation of spontaneous conversations across different office settings, such as break rooms, corridors, and informal meetings. Ethical guidelines were followed, including informed consent and anonymity of participants.

A conceptual framework guiding this research is Thematic Analysis, which provides a way of identifying recurring linguistic and sociocultural patterns in the data. I formed themes inductively by close reading of transcribed exchanges, and determined categories based on communicative functions, social contexts, and structural forms of code-switching. To support valid findings, triangulation was carried out by referring to the context of my observational notes and comparing them with the recorded data. Additionally, accountability for researcher bias was examined through reflexivity, while consistency and reliability were established through collaborative refinement of themes.

## **Thematic Analysis**

| <b>Concept</b>      | <b>Description</b>                                                      | <b>Observational Insights</b>                                                                   |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Contextual Cues     | Linguistic shifts influenced by tone, topic, or interpersonal dynamics. | Observed switches to English during formal updates; Urdu used for casual peer exchanges.        |
| Structural Patterns | Use of tag-switching, intra- and inter-sentential code-switching.       | Employees used English phrases mid-sentence when discussing technical matters.                  |
| Social Hierarchy    | Language choice as a reflection of authority or solidarity.             | Supervisors predominantly initiated English switches; subordinates reciprocated in mixed codes. |

|                      |                                                                 |                                                                                         |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Identity Expression  | Use of language to signal group belonging or differentiation.   | Frequent switches to Urdu during in-group conversations to establish camaraderie.       |
| Functional Switching | Code-switching as a pragmatic tool to manage conversation flow. | Switches used for humor, clarification, or conflict mitigation during team discussions. |

### **Contextual Cues**

#### **Description**

It was shown that linguistic selections were substantially impacted by contextual issues such as the tenor of discourse, the topic, and speaker relations. These changes are not random, but instead, they are rooted in the dynamics of the situation.

#### **Observational Insights**

Employees would often shift into English during formal updating events, particularly when speaking to a hierarchical superior, or formally presenting the outcomes of their work. By contrast, during informal peer interactions, such as informal banter in the hallway, or during lunch breaks, employees tended to prefer communicating in Urdu. This suggests that language provides a marker of contextual appropriateness, or indeed, social propriety.

### **Structural Patterns**

#### **Description**

Code-switching took place in structurally consistent ways according to observable mechanisms in the language. I found three major ways of switching: intrasentential switching (between sentences), intrasentential switching (within a sentence), and tag-switching (which I define using discourse markers such as "you know," "right?"). Whatever these forms may mean, together they demonstrate grammatical competence and the communicative flexibility demanded in code-switching.

#### **Observational Insights**

While employees spoke, it was common to hear them specify English terms or clauses mid-sentence, particularly when talking about technical topics, CFTs related to IT, finance or administrative procedures. This pattern suggests that English acts as a dominant linguistic resource when it comes to specialized or institutional related discourse while Urdu continues accounts for everyday relational talk.

### **Social Hierarchy**

#### **Description**

Code-switching seemed to mimic the organization's hierarchical structure. Our superior would often start conversations with their subordinate in English in order to portray formality and display authority. The subordinate either continued in English without code-switching, or they switched into mixed codes, which maintained the hierarchical boundary but also added a more personal aspect to the communication.

### **Observational Insights**

Supervisors were most likely to initiate interactions in English which was far more likely in meeting and more structured settings. The patterning of usage demonstrated was not uniformly adhered to by subordinates. In particular, subordinates sometimes switched to Urdu when seeking engagement and empathy, or in an informal context. This type of negotiated dialogue illustrates the stratified use of language that exists both within institutional expectations and within a relational context of rapport.

### **Identity Expression**

#### **Description**

Language use arose as a vehicle for the expression of identity and group membership. Code-switching served as a symbolic resource to claim in-group membership or differentiate oneself from others. Urdu was typically used to reinforce cultural agreement, whereas English was used to signal professional alignment or cosmopolitan identity.

### **Observational Insights**

Urdu was more often used for interaction among colleagues with similar ethnic, regional, or social backgrounds which facilitated an idea of solidarity and a shared experience. This theme of linguistic disruption has identified how language serves as a connector to communication but also as a mechanism of social alignment.

### **Functional Switching**

#### **Description**

In addition to structural or social reasons, code-switching could also perform several pragmatic functions, such as managing turn-taking, clarifying points, making jokes, or softening an act that could be face-threatening. With a functional view of code-switching, this reflects discourse-oriented models that see language as a resource for strategizing meaning in conversation.

### **Observational Insights**

Participants in team discussions in Urdu often shifted codes to add emphasis, clarify misunderstandings, or ease tensions. For example, participants used humorous Urdu phrases to draw out laughter, and then used English to ensure clarity in roles defined in a task. Such an approach suggests a purposeful and context-sensitive use of both languages in discussion.

## **Results and Discussion**

Bilingualism is not strange, nor is it specific to specific situations in the multilingual and post-colonial sociolinguistic landscape in Pakistan, in fact it is pervasive and forms an everyday communicative practice. This is particularly observable in urban professional settings, where Urdu and English flow together in a fluid, dynamic relationship. The current study, with the workplace setting of a government office in Rahim Yar Khan, provides interesting evidence of code-switching not only as a linguistic phenomenon, but as a socially embedded phenomenon.

Moreover, the study focused on informal conversation (lunch time chatter, conversations in corridors, and casual conversations at desks) and demonstrates that Urdu-English code-switching is a complex, strategic communicative behavior (informal conversation) and ultimately a subconscious communicative behavior that is shaped by variables of context, hierarchy, and identity.

### **Language as Societal Behavior**

Code-switching in this way transcends a simple bilingual proficiency and, as Gumperz (1982) suggests, I treat it as social behavior. It, as Gumperz (1982, p. 77) writes is a contextualized performance; that signals both a change in speaker intention, relational stance or topic orientation. In the data produced, the language alternation that has been displayed has not as a result of inadequacies in vocabulary, but instead, it was a meaningful affordance that negotiated boundaries, whether they are professional, emotional, or cultural. This is consistent with Gumperz's (1982) contextualization cues theory, seeing language shifts as semiotic cues to scaffold interactional meaning. Whether it was switching language to English when face-to-face with a superior, or reverting to Urdu while recounting a humorous anecdote with a colleague, switching language carried an interpretive load, that extended beyond surface linguistic form.

In addition, this aligns with Giles et al.'s (1973) Communication Accommodation Theory, which proposes that people adjust their use of language to either converge with or diverge from their conversational partners based on relational goals. For example, subordinates who chose English when responding to supervisors were not just demonstrating proficiency: they were conforming to expected institutional roles and hierarchies. Switches to Urdu among colleagues typically tended to be for building solidarity and ease, and were a good example of Giles' model of convergence through accommodation.

### **Social Hierarchy and Power Relations**

A strong theme that emerged from the findings was the intersection of language and institutional power. Observations revealed a clear hierarchy in language use. Supervisors, those of power individually and collectively initiated language in English, but especially in reference to knowledge, task, and goals. This brings into line with Myers-Scotton's (1993) Markedness Model, which assumes speakers' choices based on the markedness of a social situation. English is the "unmarked" choice in this instance, indicating authority and formality in professional hierarchies.

Responses by subordinates varied. Some responses were entirely in English, while others used code-mixed responses that combined English lexis and Urdu syntax, which is common with local bilingual norms (Kachru, 1986). The use of mixed responses served two functions: they recognized the power in English and softened the interaction through culturally relevant Urdu structures. This blending aspect is an example of linguistic flexibility as well as a subtle way of negotiating power and identity.

### **Identity, Affiliation, and Belonging**

In addition to institutional alignment, the selection of language also served as an important means to express personal and group identity. This research demonstrated how code-switching in participant's work-related texts frequently indicated group membership, especially in informal interactions. Language use, particularly Urdu, as a form of social identity was shown to be favoured when fellowship, regionalism, or emotive expressiveness was desired. On the other hand, the use of English language was often undertaken as it implied some modernity, inherent competence and globality, particularly in job-specific and technical violence. Zentella's (1997) work on bilingual speech communities supports this interpretation - many reflections on linguistic practice can be both reflections of, and constructions of social identity. It should be noted that at several moments of shared laughter, cultural reference, or intra-group bonding, Urdu was used. This is suggestive of an even broader argument: language is important, but language also has emotive and relational value; as Auer's (1998) conversation-analytic view espouses, meaning does

not exist in an abstracted plane of units of language, but is formed in dynamic and real-time social interaction.

It is interesting that language choice sometimes acted to differentiate rather than unify. In some cases, participants-maintained English in all instances, in order to maintain educational distinction or cosmopolitan identity, nudging away from their Urdu-leaning peers. In all of these cases, the participants' practices demonstrated the sociolinguistic reality of language prestige planning where speakers control perceptions through engaged language use to signal their aspirational identities (Rahman, 2002).

### **Structural and Functional Dimensions**

Data from this study correspond quite well with Poplack's (1980) typology of code-switching: intrasentential, intrasentential, and tag-switching. What was most prominent in the data were observed instances of intrasentential switching the use of English phrases integrated within otherwise Urdu sentences particularly during discussions that were technical and administrative in nature. The switches that were made were not arbitrary. They were consistent with the grammar of each language, and were contextually motivated, suggesting high levels of bilingual competence. The patterns reveal what Romaine (1995) describes as grammatically constrained bilingualism structural fluency in both languages makes mixing functional. In the previous example, we observed a workplace, and it was interesting to note the context of the use of English in a predominantly Urdu environment. English was essentially the lexicon on which the institution operated crucial for the accuracy of technical terms while Urdu allowed speakers to express their relationship and emotion with each other. Their use of English and Urdu parallels Canagarajah's (2013) description of translanguaging where participants are making use of an integrated repertoire of languages with an ultimate enhancement of communication.

In terms of pragmatics, code-switching took on many roles in this study. It was needed to clarify instructions and control turn-taking, to interject humor, and moderate criticism. During emotions were running high over disagreements, or the delegating of tasks the participants indicated switches to Urdu for a laugh or use of tension reduction which corresponded with Holmes' (2013) idea that the act of switching languages can perform discursive functions like managing conflict or emphasizing a point. Tag-switching was predominantly evident in English, using fillers and discourse markers (i.e. "you know", "actually", "right?"). Tag switching differed according to the participants, creating subtle changes in emphasis, but intentionally maintaining fluency and conversational rhythm. The functional elements of combining languages highlight that code-switching is ultimately an asset, not a barrier, pragmatic feature that adds rather than complicates professional communication.

### **Contextual Triggers and Interactional Settings**

The contextual nature of code-switching was also a significant finding. In informal contexts hallway conversations, chatting together at lunch or even casual interruptions there was a much higher instance of fluid language switching. Again, Wei (2005) supports that bilingualism is an ecological phenomenon that is determined by the physical and social context, in that the more flexible the context of communication, the more likely participants are to display bilingual behavior. Alternatively, in formal settings, like team meetings or report presentations, English was the dominant language used, which suggests imposed language expectations by the institution. Interestingly, even in informal settings, the topic of conversation shaped the choices made in code switching. For example, during a flurry of humorous stories, Urdu dominated the conversation, suggesting its proximity to cultural forms of emotional or humorous expression, while English dominated conversations about deadlines, project recaps, and management communications where

it was assigned perceived functional clarity, prestige and authority. These patterns reveal that code-switching is as much a response to who is speaking, as opposed to what is being spoken about, and equally to where. These subtle shifts demonstrate support for Labov's (1972) assertion that sociolinguistic investigations are to consider the whole speech event and not simply segments of speech events, or the average utterance participants, setting, topic and their intentions.

### **Linguistic Negotiation and Inclusivity**

One of the less overt, but ultimately critical, understandings gained from the observational data is how code-switching allows for inclusive communication. In a workplace filled with individuals of differing linguistic and educational backgrounds, code-switching functions as a connector. Code-switching allows for differing levels of English proficiency to co-exist, while still upholding standards of professional discourse. Rehman and Mehmood (2015) note that in workplaces in Pakistan, code-switching helps create socio-cognitive equivalences, thus managing comprehension gaps and communicative friction. The current study had similar results, in settings where a combination of English and Urdu communication was normalized and helped the group arrive at a shared understanding. This flexibility is particularly beneficial in contexts requiring teamwork, collaborative problem-solving, and task completion as part of a team in a multilingual professional setting. At the same time, there were also occasions where too much or deliberately utilized English caused intimidation or distance, especially for staff who were less fluent (and operating at a distance) in the English language. These occasions remind us of the duality of bilingualism it can both unite and separate, depending on how it is used. Therefore, language policy and training programs should support translanguaging competence, rather than conformation to a normative monolingual approach to language use (or perhaps in conjunction with English for the purpose of language development).

### **Implications for Sociolinguistic Theory and Practice**

This study advances research in workplace sociolinguistics for providing sound, evidential support for bilingual behavior in everyday work situations. The study's approach of naturalistic observation allows researchers to observe naturally occurring language use; in contrast, most researcher-driven inquiry uses controlled interviews or self-report criteria, and for this reason, provides data of language use in its most genuine form. This study demonstrates that office bilingualism is more than the result of necessity, it is a well-orchestrated linguistic, social and professional negotiation. For theories/approaches like the Markedness Model, Communication Accommodation Theory, and Interactional Sociolinguistics this study provides data that illustrates that language alternation occurs for social reasons, is context-specific and social identity laden. The study also reinforces the usefulness of these approaches as relevance in contemporary multilingual workplace environments, specifically in post-colonial societies like Pakistan. From a policy perspective, the findings have potential utility in workplace communication policy. Instead of relegating code-switching to a form of unprofessionalism characterized by chaotic communication, organizations should recognize that code-switching is a legitimate, and often necessary communicative act. Awareness of Swedish-Arabic or any bilingual communicative strategy could be beneficial in employee training, as well incorporated in employee communication training or as awareness of language in stakeholders' workplace language/s and propensities to influence organizational practices in meaningful ways.

### **Conclusion**

This research illustrates the complex, layered, and heavily social characteristics of bilingual communication in multilingual, post-colonial workplaces like those in urban Pakistan. It is clear, within the parameters of these study informal office contexts in the Punjab Social Protection office

in Rahim Yar Khan, that the practice of code-switching between Urdu and English reflects an intricate communicative strategy, not a language deficiency, linguistic anomaly nor an alternative communication channel. The naturalistic conversations observed in the study have demonstrated the ways in which bilingual office speakers negotiate workplace discourse and shift between Urdu and English for pragmatic, social, and institutional ends.

In effect, this research understands language as not merely a neutral instrument of communication, but as a performing act which indexes identity, hierarchy, solidarity, and intention. The analysis draws on the theoretical insights of Gumperz's (1982) work, Myers-Scotton's (1993) work, and Giles' (1973) work, and vividly illustrates that language choice is inherently contextualized, relational, and to a certain extent, cultural in nature. Through spontaneous and unprompted interactions observed in hallways, break rooms, and during desk-side conversations, this study demonstrates that code-switching is as much about what is being said as it is about who is speaking, to whom, in what setting, and for what purpose.

One of the most prominent conclusions drawn from the data is that code-switching in these office contexts is a reflection of social decorum and appropriateness. The repeated observation that English dominates in upward communication (particularly when addressing superiors) and in work-specific, technical discussions while Urdu emerges as the preferred code in lateral or downward, informal interactions illustrates the socially regulated nature of language choice. This pattern not only supports the claims of the Markedness Model, wherein speakers select linguistic codes based on the expected norms of a given interaction, but also reflects the unspoken rules of power and propriety that govern workplace behavior in a hierarchical society.

Related to this finding is the conceptualization of code-switching in the context of workplace social stratification. The supervisors were frequently noted to initiate contact using (exclusively) English, thus creating an implicit formal and authoritative tone. The subordinates tended to respond using mixed code-maintaining the expected formal tenor and register with an English lexicon, but softening the interaction through Urdu syntax and particles. This bilingual mix signifies the participants' recognition of their contexts' professional parameters, while also balancing their personal intentions of relationship maintenance or level of familiarity with their interlocutor. Each code choice demonstrates both structural competence and socio-pragmatic flexibility, fortifying the conclusion that bilingual speakers in this workplace context are attuned to the social value of their linguistic choices.

In addition, this research indicates that language is more than an instrument used in interactions, language acts as a medium to position identity and develop community. Code-switching often functioned as a way to signify membership, share humor, or invoke shared cultural bonds and experiences. For example, participants would often switch to Urdu to tell stories, tell jokes, or share something that was emotionally charged - in the cases where participants felt they needed a degree of tenderness, empathy, and socio-cultural relevance. In contrast, English represented a register of institutional discourse and formal alignment, especially when participants were referring to formal things or reporting on work tasks. This constructed duality - engaging in obliged emotional expressiveness in Urdu and obliged transnationality, clarity, and order in English is analogous to the psychological and cultural compartmentalization that many urban professionals in Pakistan experience bilingual balancing act that affirms one's local identity whilst also signaling global competency.

The structural perspective on the types of code-switching demonstrated especially the prevalence of intrasentential switching and tag-switching indicates a high level of grammatical and cognitive control by the speakers. Those switches were not random or disruptive, but instead was well-fitted to the context and grammatically integrated. The switching often served the communicative

functions of clarification, emphasis, and coherence. The use of English phrases intermixed in Urdu clauses while discussing areas of specialization like finance or IT is indicative of the institutional positioning of English in professional settings. Alternatively, the use of Urdu while code-switching to create humor, to account for or soften face-threatening acts, or to express solidarity, is representative of the contextual and interpersonal motivations for language alternation.

Notably, this research lends greater strength to the position that code-switching is a strategic communicative resource, not an indication of linguistic confusion. As supported by the evidence, speakers engage in well considered and contextually aware decisions regarding switching when, to whom, and how. Such decisions are guided by several variables-such as speaker role, setting, topic, and social proximity-that intersect to create a richly textured linguistic landscape. In this regard, the process of alternating between Urdu and English works very much like a rhetorical device-nuancing the tone, pace, and sense of dialogue.

Yet, code-switching has implications that reach beyond speaker-level strategies. On a more macro level, the linguistic practice highlights institutional inclusiveness and communicative fairness in the workplace. Whereas code-switching can bridge divides between linguistically diverse backgrounds and facilitate smooth interaction, it can also unwittingly perpetuate divides when English is overused or weaponized as a prestige marker. Some observed examples showed how the sole use of English produced communicative distance, especially for employees who were not as proficient in the language. This double function of code-switching to include and to exclude requires policymakers and organizational managers to have a more subtle appreciation. Instead of imposing monolingual norms or regarding code-switching as unprofessional, companies should acknowledge and leverage the communicative potential of bilingualism as a way to produce mutual understanding, cooperation, and respect.

This research's design allegiance to observation, naturalistic data gathering enabled a richer and more genuine examination of bilingual discourse in a context of everyday practice. By capturing the talk on record as naturally as possible without interference from a researcher, this research circumvented the constraints associated with self-report or staged interviewing and instead recovered the lived reality of office professional language. In so doing, it confirms Labov's (1972) dictum that linguistic events have to be interpreted in situ and in their social contexts as contributing instances to the emergent texture of human interaction.

From a theoretical standpoint, the results discovered contribute to the field of interactional sociolinguistics by providing empirical findings relating to how code-switching functions within post-colonial multilingual workspaces; the findings also support core tenets of Communication Accommodation Theory, contextualization cues and the Markedness Model, while also extending the field's knowledge of how language alternation works at the intersections of identity, power and pragmatics. Furthermore, the findings offered an empirical demonstration of these models in the Pakistani context, which contributes, alongside other engaged work, to the project of decolonizing sociolinguistic research by prioritizing the voices and activity of people in the Global South. In conclusion, Urdu-English code-switching in informal office spaces should be seen as a multifaceted sociolinguistic practice, as much communicative, symbolic, and performative. It is a product of the bilingual speaker's dexterity, awareness of social norms, and their navigational capacity in the complex environment of professional interaction. Given the context of workplace practices, code-switching is certainly not a dysfunctional element of language but is rather a dynamic form of cultural hybridity, professional adaptability, and human connection. As Pakistan and other multilingual contexts develop in relation to future professional contexts in globalized times, recognizing and embracing these language practices will be significant in creating inclusive, fluent and culturally relevant workplaces.

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